UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/C.12/2001/SR.35
22 August 2001

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Twenty-sixth (extraordinary) session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 15 August 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. BONOAN-DANDAN

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS:

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (continued)

Third periodic report of the Syrian Arab Republic (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS:

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (continued)

Third periodic report of the Syrian Arab Republic (continued) (E/1994/104/Add.23; E/C.12/Q/SYR/1; HR/CESCR/NONE/2001/2)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic resumed their places at the Committee table.

2. The CHAIRPERSON invited Committee members to put questions relating to items 19 to 27 of the list of issues (arts. 10-12).

3. Ms. BARAHONA-RIERA, referring to comments made by the Syrian delegation at the previous meeting, said that in order to implement programmes to eliminate discrimination against women the State party must acknowledge that such discrimination existed. Greater efforts by the Syrian authorities were required to improve the legislative framework in order to ensure equal rights. For instance, was there any legislation to protect women and children against domestic violence and were any State-run services or facilities available for victims? What steps was the Government taking to improve sexual and reproductive health, particularly in rural areas, where there was a high rate of maternal mortality? Did the State run any programmes to raise awareness of women's rights in general and, more specifically, to promote better access to the employment market?

4. Mr. ANTANGANA said that the written replies provided by the Syrian Government had failed to answer satisfactorily many of the questions in the list of issues. He suggested that in future reports the delegation should follow the numbering on the list of issues and answer each question one by one. By way of example, no information had been provided on marital rape, nor had statistics on the incidence of poverty been provided. He would welcome such information.

5. Mr. RIEDEL, focusing his comments on article 12 of the Covenant, said that positive factors included the information contained in paragraphs 233 et seq. of the report (E/1994/104/Add.23). Also welcome was the fact that the Syrian Government had started to use indicators in the field of health. Nonetheless, in line with General Comment No. 14 on the right to the highest attainable standard of health, what the Committee was really looking for were comparative data, including benchmarks. He hoped that the delegation would bear that in mind for future reports.

6. The State party had failed to answer question 24 on the list of issues properly. What percentage of health resources had been allocated to primary health care in the last five years? Referring to question 26, he sought more information on the local community-based primary health-care services referred to in paragraph 231 of the report; were they pilot programmes or part of wide-scale reform? Did foreigners, including legal and illegal immigrants, enjoy equal access to health-care services or were they eligible for emergency treatment only? He would

also welcome further details of the health situation of prisoners, in the light of information from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) about poor sanitary conditions and high rates of tuberculosis and malnutrition in penal institutions.

7. Mr. PILLAY, responding to comments made by the delegation at the 34th meeting, said that his source of information on the current unemployment rate in Syria was the Annual Report for 2000 of the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Freedoms and Human Rights in Syria (CDF). That report also indicated that as much as 65 per cent of the population currently lived below the poverty line. His comments on corruption in Syria and the situation of the Kurds were based on information contained in an Economist Intelligence Unit report for the first quarter of 2000, and in the Kurds of Syria, issued by the Kurdish Human Rights Project in December 1998.

8. Turning to article 11, could the delegation confirm that despite inflation the minimum wage had not risen since 1994? Given the incidence of poverty in Syria the minimum wage seemed too low to guarantee an adequate standard of living.

9. According to the written replies (HR/CESCR/NONE/2001/2) there were no homeless people in Syria - those in need were taken into social welfare institutions or provided with various types of subsidized housing. However, CDF referred to an acute shortage of affordable housing, accommodation without drinking water and electricity and the existence of many shanty towns in the country. Were the homeless regarded as vagrants and merely institutionalized or taken care of by charitable organizations? Despite its obligation under the Committee's General Comment No. 7, the State party had failed to provide information on evictions, which presumably took place given the extent of poverty and the difficulty paying rent.

10. Mr. CEAUSU said that the report contained detailed information on the various categories of disabled people and measures to ensure their integration in society. However no mention was made of those who, on account of their disability, were wholly dependent on others. They placed a heavy burden on their families - what provision did the State make for them and their families?

11. From the report it appeared that adoption was not legally recognized, although it was possible to place abandoned children and orphans in foster homes as an alternative to orphanages. Why was that the case? Surely it was in the interest of children to live in a family environment. Furthermore, was international adoption allowed, although there was no legal provision for it?

12. The State party was clearly concerned about guaranteeing access to food, inter alia by subsidizing basic foodstuffs. Were such subsidies available for low-income families only and, if so, on what basis was their income determined? In some countries subsidies had been provided for all families to meet high fuel costs during particularly difficult winters, however, the question arose of who really benefited from such subsidies, the rich or the poor.

13. Notwithstanding the detailed description in the report on programmes for building construction and low-cost housing, the State party had not provided the type of information the

Committee really required to assess whether the right to adequate housing was in fact guaranteed: the total number of houses available, and details of public and privately owned property.

14. With regard to article 12, what policies or programmes did the Government implement to ensure a healthy and pollution-free environment for its citizens? Also, were there any special health programmes for communities in remote areas and for nomads?

15. Mr. GRISSA said that in the introductory statement mention had been made of the heavy burden placed on the budget, in particular for social services, in view of the high population growth rate. However, the Government itself was responsible for that, given the absence of adequate birth control programmes. In fact, for political reasons, it positively encouraged the growth of the population, which was considerably smaller than that of the neighbouring States of Iraq and Turkey. In view of such a policy, rather than complaining about budget constraints, the State should gladly provide for its citizens.

16. Mr. SADI said that the water shortage in Syria had now reached critical levels and asked what steps the Government was taking to address the problem. Damascus was one of the most polluted cities in the world, yet unlike most of the neighbouring countries Syria had thus far failed to introduce unleaded petrol. What was the reason for that?

17. Mr. TEXIER said that children were likely to suffer most from the reportedly high incidence of poverty. He asked whether it was true that the child labour rate had increased considerably in recent years.

18. The delegation had not given a satisfactory reply to a question he had asked at the previous meeting regarding the Kurds. It was his understanding that Kurds born in Syria did not enjoy the same rights as other citizens. For instance they had a different identity document, which was not valid for expatriation.

19. Mr. SALLOUM (Syrian Arab Republic) said that he was not familiar with CDF and that information provided by that organization was likely to be inaccurate or even totally false, such as the statistics on the percentage of the population living below the poverty line. Apparently all Committee members were using the same source of information, yet those who visited the country would realize that the real situation was being misrepresented. In response to comments made about the difficulty Syrians had in earning an adequate living, he acknowledged that wages were not as high as the Government would wish, for the reasons outlined earlier. He had not complained about the high population growth, but had merely stated the facts. There were family planning programmes, as a result of which the rate of population growth had decreased from 3.8 per cent to 2.45 per cent. However, some 250,000 new children were entering school each year, which was clearly a burden on the education system. Reforms had been introduced to cope with the situation.

20. A further problem was that since 1948 Syria had suffered the consequences of its relations with Israel, which had deteriorated with the occupation of Syrian territory in 1967 during the Six Day War. Eighty-five per cent of the population had been expelled from that territory. Syria also provided a home for some 400,000 Palestinian refugees, who enjoyed the

same rights as Syrian citizens, save access to a diplomatic career. Under the relevant United Nations resolutions those refugees should be able to return to their homeland. The Syrian authorities would look into the possibility of granting the few remaining rights they were currently deprived of for those who opted to stay in Syria.

21. The Committee appeared to be giving greater credence to information from unofficial sources than to that provided by the Government. People were not evicted from their homes and sitting tenants were protected by law. Only in cases where tenants failed to fulfil their obligations could steps be taken to remove them. The possibility of evicting tenants who did not fulfil their contractual obligations existed in all countries.

22. Subsidies for food and medicine were available to all without exception. Consideration was currently being given to changing the way subsidies were granted in order to better target those in need. The rights of disabled people were protected under Syrian law. With regard to adoption, any family could take custody of a child and become legally responsible for the child's care and education, although the child would retain the surname given at birth. Heating subsidies to cover fuel costs were given without discrimination and were not subject to a means test. They were paid as a flat rate lump sum and therefore had a proportionately greater impact on people with low incomes than on higher income groups. The Committee had asked for statistics on new housing, renovations, and the ratio of private sector to public sector housing. An attempt would be made to provide that information, but some data were not available as data-collection efforts were currently focused on economic indicators.

23. With regard to environmental protection, it would clearly be desirable to increase the use of unleaded petrol, but that was problematic because many vehicles in Syria were old and could not run on unleaded fuel. Efforts were, however, being made to reduce pollution in other ways. In cooperation with the European Union and various international organizations, the Syrian Government was promoting the use of substitute fuels that were more environmentally friendly.

24. A number of programmes existed for nomads, including mobile schools, mobile libraries and mobile health units. Along with Jordan, Syria suffered from an acute water shortage. Efforts currently centred on making better use of available water resources, for example by means of hydroponic methods in agriculture. Mass media campaigns and school programmes encouraged behavioural change to reduce wastage, and progress would be highlighted in the next report to the Committee. It was true that, among people living below the poverty line, children suffered most. But the figure quoted for the proportion of people living below the poverty line in Syria was incorrect. Special efforts were made to protect children and ensure that they received adequate health care. Indeed, UNICEF had praised Syria for its system of child health protection. The child mortality rate had fallen considerably, as noted by UNICEF.

25. Mr. SARRAJ (Syrian Arab Republic), responding to questions of a legal nature, said that Syrian legislation offered protection against domestic violence. Islamic law (sharia) recognized the sanctity of marriage and the family, and levels of domestic violence were low. As in all countries, there were instances of domestic violence against a child or a spouse, but such infractions were dealt with under the Syrian Penal Code which, in particular, did not allow a husband to inflict corporal punishment on his wife. The Government had established shelters for

the victims of conjugal violence. Victims received medical assistance free of charge, and perpetrators of conjugal violence were prosecuted. Marital rape was not a problem in Syria and was not covered by the Penal Code.

26. With regard to family planning and reproductive health services, government policy, through the provision of family planning and reproductive health education and services, aimed to ensure that population growth did not outrun the economic resources of the country. Health services, including primary health care, were provided by the State free of charge, and accounted for a considerable proportion of public expenditure. State hospitals and medical facilities were open to all, including Kurds, foreigners and refugees, whether legal or illegal. It was therefore surprising to hear an accusation of anti-Kurdish discrimination, particularly from the representative of an organization that had failed to keep an appointment with the Syrian delegation, thereby missing an opportunity for dialogue. CDF had spoken to the Committee in private, leaving the Syrian delegation no opportunity to refute accusations or clarify matters. He wished to make it clear to the Committee that there was no discrimination against Kurds in Syria.

27. With respect to the health and medical care of prisoners, all prisoners had access to medical and dental services, hospitals and dispensaries, free of charge. With regard to disabled people, he cited the example of disabled students who had been encouraged to study law and become lawyers, despite the initial resistance of the Law Society. More generally, there were a large number of benevolent societies in the private sector providing food, health care and pharmaceuticals to the handicapped.

28. Mr. GRISSA explained that the Committee was looking at all the information available on Syria, including the documents submitted by the Government. The various sources of information were given the same weight as a basis for discussion, and the Committee's aim was to assess through dialogue with the delegation how far the State was applying the Covenant. Rather than making accusations, the Committee asked questions in order to elicit information.

29. Mr. CEAUSU said that there appeared to be some misunderstanding, possibly as a result of interpretation difficulties. The report provided by the Syrian authorities was rich in information and reflected a concern for social welfare. His concern regarding the disabled, however, was not the partially handicapped who could be integrated into society and employment, but, rather, the totally handicapped who were completely dependent on others. The Government report did not cover that category. Where totally handicapped people lived with families, they imposed a heavy burden on family members. He wished to know whether the Syrian Government provided assistance to those families or placed totally handicapped people in public institutions.

30. Mr. TEXIER said that the Committee was asking questions in good faith. For example, with regard to the percentage of the population below the poverty line, if a Committee member asked a question based on a report that as much as 65 per cent of the population was below the poverty line, it would be better for the delegation to reply by giving the correct percentage rather than by simply stating that the figure was incorrect. The Committee considered not only the reports of States parties, but also reports by the specialized agencies of the United Nations and by non-governmental organizations. In the case of Syria, the Committee had considered the CDF report, which was available to the delegation. CDF claimed that it had the right to legal

recognition in accordance with provisions on freedom of association, and sought to function as a non-governmental organization dealing with human rights in Syria. According to CDF, the Government had recently refused it permission to hold a human rights seminar. According to the delegation, CDF was not entitled to legal recognition. The Committee therefore wished to clarify matters.

31. Mr. RIEDEL said that his question had sought clarification of the health status of prisoners.

32. Mr. SALLOUM (Syrian Arab Republic) said that there indeed appeared to be a problem of interpretation. His delegation had not categorized CDF as an organization not entitled to legal recognition, but had stated that CDF had failed to appear at an arranged meeting with his delegation. Furthermore, the Committee had before it the CDF report, but his delegation had not even seen that report. The information provided by his Government had been submitted in due form, translated and made available to the Committee. His delegation had every wish to cooperate with the Committee, but such methods of work were unacceptable. Dialogue implied equal treatment - his delegation should have had the CDF report in advance. While the Committee was free to look at other sources of information, the Chairperson should take steps to regularize the situation.

33. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee had received the CDF document that very morning. The questions posed by Committee members, however, were based on a range of reports in the public domain. The replies by the Syrian Government to the list of issues were insufficient and did not answer the questions raised. The Committee's aim was not to pass judgement but to assist countries to fulfil their obligations under the Covenant. The Committee's proceedings were not an investigation but a dialogue between peers, carried out in a spirit of cooperation. On behalf of the Committee, she apologized to the delegation for any offence caused, but pointed out that the delegation had provided almost no information in response to the Committee's questions.

34. Mr. SALLOUM (Syrian Arab Republic) said that no offence had been taken. The Committee's procedure should indeed be a dialogue between equals, and his remarks had simply been aimed at securing treatment on an equal footing by being given access to all documents available to Committee members. If his delegation had failed to answer some questions, it had done so unwittingly. The members of his delegation would endeavour to answer all questions in a constructive way. He had chosen, at the present juncture, to speak in English to avoid misunderstanding, although it appeared that he had been misunderstood even by members of the Committee who spoke Arabic. He requested clarification of the question on health conditions in prisons.

35. Mr. RIEDEL asked for details of action to improve health conditions in the country's prisons.

36. Mr. SALLOUM (Syrian Arab Republic) said that health conditions in prisons were generally good, and that the incidence of tuberculosis and respiratory or infectious diseases was no higher among prisoners than among the general population. All prisoners received medical attention as needed.

37. Mr. SARRAJ (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Law Faculty of the University of Damascus had visited prisons in Damascus and elsewhere in the country, and had found the standard of health care to be high compared with other countries. No complaints of serious illnesses, especially HIV/AIDS, had ever been received. While there were very occasional cases of tuberculosis, once identified infected prisoners were isolated and transferred to a special centre, where they received appropriate treatment. There had been a single case of HIV/AIDS, contracted by a foreigner imprisoned in Syria for drug smuggling, who had been treated at a special hospital in Syria until his death.

38. Special care was given to both the partially and seriously disabled. The severely disabled were not ignored, but enjoyed full protection, especially from associations for the disabled, which catered to their health, nutrition and other needs. They were cared for by special staff who visited the day-care centres where they lived if no care was available at home.

39. The CHAIRPERSON invited Committee members to put questions relating to items 28 to 32 of the list of issues (arts. 13-15).

40. Mr. RIEDEL asked the delegation to explain why Syria had not ratified the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, since the Convention had been referred to in the Committee's General Comment No. 13 on the right to education. He noted that the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments, adopted at the World Education Forum in April 2000, enjoined all States to develop national plans of education by the end of 2002. Was Syria working on its own Dakar plan of action on education and, if so, did it reflect the content of articles 13 and 14 of the Covenant, to which General Comments Nos. 13 and 11, respectively, referred?

41. Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO asked the delegation to explain the reduction in expenditure on education between 1981 and 1991. Since the difference had not been allocated to defence spending, he wished to know whether it had been allocated to social spending other than on education. He asked whether, in addition to the mobile libraries for nomadic children, there were any specific educational programmes for them. Such programmes were necessary, although no attempt should be made to persuade them to abandon their nomadic habits. He also wondered whether, in Syria's multicultural society, there were specific educational programmes for Kurds or any official programme or assistance for preserving Kurdish culture.

42. Mr. THAPALIA asked what steps the Government was taking to eradicate the practice of expelling children of ajanib (unregistered foreign Kurds) and maktumin (unregistered Syrian-born Kurds) origin from schools, in violation of article 13 of the Covenant. He also wished to know why refugee children did not receive primary education in their mother tongue and needed special authorization to study in Syrian universities, practices which impeded access to education for all.

43. Mr. GRISSA noted that education was compulsory only at the primary level. Since, according to UNESCO, nine years of schooling were needed to eradicate illiteracy, most countries had made education compulsory to 15 or 16 years of age. Was the State party moving

in that direction? The school-leaving age should be the same as the minimum age for work, which he understood to be 15, to obviate the need for children leaving school at 12 to lose three years on the streets until they were eligible for work.

44. Following the recent troubles in Algeria, Morocco had reversed its age-old denial of the existence of the Berbers, had recognized their right to their own language and culture and had created a special university to teach the Berber language and literature and so preserve their culture. Why, then, did Syria continue to deny the Kurds, going so far as to claim that Saladin, the Middle East's greatest hero, was an Arab when he was in fact a Kurd whose Arabic was limited?

45. Mrs. BARAHONA-RIERA said that the delegation's failure to answer her question as to whether there were any government programmes or projects for promoting women's rights suggested that none existed. The only reference to women in the State party's report to UNESCO on education for all was a United Nations-sponsored programme of vocational training for rural women. She would be grateful if the delegation would reply to her question.

46. Mr. SINGH (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that basic education for all and the right to education were priorities of his organization, and implied respect for cultural rights. He congratulated the delegation on the State party's report to the World Education Forum, in which it had explained in detail its activities to promote literacy, curriculum development, teacher training, and vocational programmes for women, all of which could be the basis for further collaboration in monitoring the development of the right to education.

47. Indeed, since its activities to provide full and equal education for all, the fundamental principle enshrined in the UNESCO Constitution, had been well documented in that report, the delegation might have referred to UNESCO's participation in education programmes and to Syria's position on possible ratification of the Convention against Discrimination in Education.

48. Human rights education should be added to the list of the authorities' stated educational objectives contained in Syria's report to the World Education Forum. Also, he wished to know how Syria's efforts to introduce lifelong education related to the theme of UNESCO's forthcoming International Conference on Education, "Learning to live together". Lastly, in connection with Mr. Wimer Zambrano's question, it was stated in the State party's report to UNESCO (part II, p. 5) that expenditure on education currently accounted for 12 per cent of the general budget with half of that earmarked for primary education.

49. Mr. CEAUSU said that the United Nations system acknowledged the existence of the fundamental rights of national minorities, a vital component of which was their right to preserve their linguistic and cultural identity. To that end, it was important that they should have access not only to education in their native languages, but also to literature in those languages. Were there any courses or schools in Syria in which education was imparted in the vernacular of linguistic minorities? Was it possible to print or publish books and newspapers in minority languages? Was access to foreign books or newspapers unrestricted? If so, was the same true of foreign satellite television broadcasts?

50. Mr. SADI asked whether any subsidies were granted for private-school education, whether university publications were censored by the State, and whether the universities possessed sufficient books. He would also be grateful for information concerning the use of the Internet in schools, and wondered whether the delegation was familiar with the Committee's two general comments on education.

51. Mr. SALLOUM (Syrian Arab Republic) said, regarding nomads, that itinerant schools, in which the normal Syrian curriculum was taught, accompanied them on their travels. Nomadic children could enter normal schools if they so desired, but were in no way coerced into doing so. While nomads were never forced to become sedentary, they were helped to do so if they wished. All legal residents of Syria, including legal refugees, had the right to attend school, within the framework of their economic, social and cultural humanitarian rights.

52. The level of compulsory education had been raised from form five to form seven, but Syria's extreme economic difficulties prevented it from increasing the school-leaving age to 15. However, the Government subsidized books and provided other post-primary incentives to obviate the need for children to start work too early. They were encouraged to enrol in vocational schools where they could learn a trade. Under Syrian legislation, the minimum age of admission to work was 16.

53. Regarding Syria's implementation of the Dakar Framework for Action, he said that its contents were taken into account in school curricula; he could not say whether Syria would be able to meet the 2002 deadline for establishing a national plan, but would try to obtain more information.

54. As for the UNESCO conference to be held the following month in Geneva, he said that Syria would be sending a large delegation led by the Minister of Education, who would explain the school system and report on all the measures taken in that area. Current primary school curricula were designed to heighten awareness of human rights and international concepts recently developed in that area.

55. All minorities were free to attend any public or private school in Syria. But in view of current financial constraints, there were no schools in which classes were taught in a language other than Arabic, apart from English and French. Many children from minorities were enrolled in Syrian primary schools. Unfortunately, funds were lacking to build the schools needed and train and hire new teachers.

56. Satellite television programmes could be broadcast in all languages. Anyone who visited Damascus or other Syrian cities would see that the shops sold music cassettes in all languages without exception.

57. His Government was convinced of the importance of the Internet, but given the high cost of equipment, its use remained limited. A programme existed for providing primary schools with computers. The Syrian Computer Association offered free training in the use of computers and the Internet for pupils and students, and there were also cyber-cafés where the Internet could be used at low cost.

58. Regarding the question on compliance with article 13 of the Covenant, he said that the right to education was guaranteed without any discrimination whatsoever, but he had no information that went beyond that contained in the detailed report presented to UNESCO. A high percentage of the budget was earmarked for education. Syria made every effort to accommodate all new pupils who enrolled in school each year.

59. Owing to the current economic situation, the Syrian Government did not have a programme to promote minority cultures. But there was nothing to prevent members of minorities from speaking their language, listening to their own music or practising their religion.

60. He was not aware that members of any minority required permission to enrol in university. Many members of minorities had graduated from Syrian universities and had become doctors, pharmacists, lawyers and the like.

61. He did not have any information on the education budget as a percentage of GDP, but his delegation would provide the Committee with such data as soon as possible and would cover the question in the next periodic report.

62. Mr. SARRAJ (Syrian Arab Republic), replying to a question by Ms. Barahona-Riera about government programmes to promote the situation of women, in particular in rural areas, said that, since the end of the Second World War, Syria had attached special importance to improving the situation of women in both urban and rural areas. There were many government projects under way, in particular to provide women with better educational opportunities.

63. On Mr. Sadi's question as to whether university publications were censored, he said that university teachers were not subjected to any controls, except for matters concerning morals, State security or the incitement of tribal or other conflicts. Such control was minimal.

64. On another question, he said that private universities might open their doors in 2002.

65. Children of refugees, including Kurds, were entitled to attend school. But Kurdish refugees must first be legally present in Syria. The fact that children of such refugees had been expelled from school did not mean that there was a deliberate expulsion policy. As in every country, the legal status of immigrants must first be resolved before their children could be enrolled in school. University education was open to all persons with the requisite secondary school diploma. There were many refugees from Arab, Islamic and other countries studying at universities in Damascus.

66. Mr. GRISSA, referring to censorship of publications, asked who decided what was moral or immoral. Did legislation specify when to censor a book? How was a violation of morals defined? Did criticism of the party in power constitute a violation of State security? He stressed that every citizen must have the right to criticize the Government.

67. Mr. RIEDEL encouraged Syria to ratify the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education.

68. Mr. SADI asked whether Syria was considering adopting the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

69. Mr. SALLOUM (Syrian Arab Republic) said, regarding the question of who decided what was moral and what was not, that there was a consensus in society on such matters. That consensus was not static: what was accepted today might not have been 50 years earlier. To cite one example, he noted that in a number of referendums in the past women in Switzerland had been repeatedly denied the right to vote. But times had changed, and they had eventually obtained that right. Syrian women had had the right to vote and stand for office well before Swiss women had. But there was a consensus that freedom of expression must not be misused to publish material promoting the hatred of a particular population group or propagating racism or racial superiority, thereby endangering the very security of the country. For example, it would be unacceptable for a university professor to publish a work asserting the racial superiority of the Syrian people or denying that women had certain rights. That would be in violation of the rights enshrined in the Syrian Constitution.

70. He would seek further information on the remaining questions put by Committee members.

71. Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO asked what censorship body specifically decided what was moral and what was politically acceptable.

72. Mr. SALLOUM (Syrian Arab Republic) said that in an academic context such decisions were taken by university councils, made up of professors.

73. In closing, he assured the Committee of his Government's future cooperation. Syria's commitment to every aspect of human rights was rooted in its religion and in 5000 years of culture and civilization, coexistence and tolerance.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.